

Dusk to Dawn

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Summary: It's been a long night, and the trio regroup at Flynn's before the start of what promises to be an even longer day. {Part of a trade with lorabaines on tumblr}

## Dusk to Dawn

It's an unspoken agreement that lands them back at Flynn's Arcade, the owner of the establishment continuing his recap of the night's events with overblown hand gestures as he fumbles with his keys. Staying at ENCOM would have been like loitering at the scene of a crime, and they'd bolted as soon as Kevin met up with them, clutching a freshly printed sheet of paper and grinning like an absolute fool.

"And it wasâ€¦ it was beautiful, man. Tron just needed one good shot and the MCP was history. He's a great program, Alan â€" the \_best\_ â€" dunno how you did it."

"Hard work," Alan responds mildly, though he's having difficulties remaining immune to Flynn's infectious smile. He allows himself a wry little half-smirk, hardly noticing Flynn's choice of pronouns in reference to lines of code. "Patience. Dedication. Things you wouldn't know about."

He's oddly pleased when Flynn laughs loudly as he ushers them all inside.

The sight of the dim arcade has a sobering effect, and he feels Lora squeeze his hand gently as Flynn moves off to turn everything on. It's strange to be standing where it all started. Though the night of untallied felonies had started only a handful of hours prior, it seems to Alan that he'd last been at Flynn's a lifetime ago. But then the lights come on, and the games start battling the god-awful synthpop blaring over the speakers for the role of Things That Give Alan Bradley a Headache, and he remembers why he was never fond of

the atmosphere in the first place.

"Do you still have a phone in here?" Lora calls over the music. "I should call Gibbs and tell him what's going on."

"Yeah, same place it's always been," Kevin informs her. Alan instinctively leans down when Lora turns her face to him, and she kisses him quickly on the cheek before moving off.

Flynn's disappeared, Alan notices belatedly, but it doesn't take long to find him. He's standing in front of the Light Cycles cabinet, face an unreadable mask as his hand comes up to wrap gingerly around the joystick.

"Don't suppose you've got a second line? There's a couple people I should probably give a heads up to before the pandemonium starts."

If Flynn heard, he makes no indication of it. Somehow, Alan knows that it's not just a matter of his question being lost among the background noise. Sensing that there might be something wrong, he takes a step forward.

Alan studies the machine, tries to see what has Flynn so thoroughly bewitched. The demo animation plays, the blue and orange racers locked in heated side-by-side combat. The blue cycle edges ahead by a nose and turns sharply, leaving the other driver no time to avoid the azure wall that's been left in his opponent's wake. The orange rider is gone in a pixilated starburst and all the theatrics of a car slamming directly into a brick wall, allowing the victor to ride off the map as the screen urges players to insert a coin and test their skills.

Alan glances at Flynn just in time to see the other man's expression contort in something not unlike pain. Brows drawn down, mouth a thin, hard line, he looks away from the screen, as if the failure of the orange rider touched a sensitive nerve. As if Flynn had just witnessed an accident. But the change is brief, and his features smooth back into quiet thoughtfulness as orange and blue square off again for another demonstration.

"Y'know what?" Kevin says a moment later, his attention still locked on the dueling racers. "Independent security monitor versus the big bad Master Control Program; it'd make a hell of a videogame."

Alan snorts.

"And what would you call it? Software Crashes: The Experience?"

Flynn's hand drops away from the joystick, trance broken at last, and he laughs as he runs his fingers through his hair.

"Nah. I was thinkin' something more likeâ€¦ TRON."

"TRON," Alan repeats, incredulous.

"Has a nice ring to it," the other programmer shrugs lazily.

"As long as I get a cut of the profits for the name," Alan quips,

thoroughly expecting it to be a joke at his expense.

"Hell, Alan, you can have all of it. Least I could do for you. And Lora. Iâ€¦ I owe the both of you, big time."

Aside from his earlier retelling of his corporate rise and fall, this is the most serious Flynn has been all night. In fact, this might be the most sincere side of him that Alan has ever seen. Even in their passing interactions back at ENCOM, he'd always been quick with jokes and teasing smirks. Now, though, there isn't a hint of humor in his gaze. Not for the first time, Alan has to wonder what happened to the man in the few hours they'd all been separated.

"I-"

Alan's response is cut off by Lora's return, and she's all smiles as she comes to stand between them.

"Well, he wasn't too happy about being woken up, but Gibbs is on board," Lora explains. "He says he's got a couple press contacts we can talk to in the morning, and he'll meet us at ENCOM so we can work out a plan."

"Perfect," Flynn grins, slipping back into his familiar, easygoing persona. "Now, what d'you kids say we celebrate a little, huh? Hit the town, find a nice dive bar, blow all our savings on lotto tickets before our good luck runs out?"

"I've gotta be back at work in-" Alan checks his watch and grimaces, "three and a half hours. And some of us still have a job we're accountable for."

"That makes two of us," Lora adds, though she sounds vaguely disappointed at having to turn down Kevin's offer. "Although I don't think any of us are gonna get much sleep. Breakfast, anyone?" she suggests.

"Coffee," Alan agrees.

"There's a diner a couple blocks over," Kevin responds, taking it in stride. "Isn't much, butâ€¦ good pancakes."

"And coffee?"

"Yes, Bradley, and coffee," Flynn rolls his eyes, already strolling back towards the breaker box, twirling his key ring around his finger. "And none of that instant crap, either. Promise."

"Well, boys, looks like we've got ourselves a date."

Lora links her arm with Alan's as they head for the doors. They wait while Kevin flips a couple switches, first cutting the music, then powering down the neon that bears his name. He hesitates for a moment before turning off the games, shoulders tensing almost imperceptibly as his fingers brush against the switch. Once everything is shut down, the silence is deafening, and Alan finds himself missing the cacophony.

"Shall we?" Lora prompts in a familiar tone, linking arms with Kevin as well. He casts a lingering look around his arcade before allowing

himself to be pulled along, and the trio makes their way for the street and the newly breaking dawn.

End  
file.